

Getting Down to Business

Luke 2:41 – 52

December 27, 2009

Our reading today comes from the second chapter of Luke's gospel, verses 41 – 52. Please listen for the reading of God's Word for His People.

⁴¹Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. ⁴²When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. ⁴³After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

⁴⁹"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁵¹Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵²And Jesus grew in wisdom, stature and in favor with God and men.

This is the Word of God and It can be trusted. Thanks be to God.

Isn't it interesting that the only record of Jesus' childhood apart from his birth should be a memory from the time of the Passover; the exact season in which the death and resurrection of our Savior would take place. The story would have had to of been one passed on to Luke by Jesus' mother, Mary. I can just imagine Mary sharing this story of Jesus' childhood with Luke sometime soon following his death. Maybe Mary realized for the first time exactly what it was that the boy Jesus was trying to tell her that day when they found him at the temple, "Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?" Scripture tells us that his parents did not understand at that time what he was saying to them. But following his death on the cross and quite possibly following his resurrection, I imagine that as Mary sat and meditated on the life of her sweet child, Jesus, her mind came across this memory and very possibly for the first time since the incident at the temple, she must have realized exactly what it was he was trying to say to them.

Of all the places a 12 year old boy; alone to wander the city streets of Jerusalem, free to meander without the closely guarded eye of his mother, with all the wonders, pleasures and points of interest to explore, Jesus asks, "Why were you searching for me?" Didn't you know where to look? It took you three days to locate me because you expected the worst had happened to me, but you should have known that I was in my Father's house (some translations say *about my Father's business*). So our scripture reading today speaks briefly concerning opportunity, option and responsibility. It speaks to our innate need, through the new life given to us by the now resurrected Christ Jesus, to seek our Father's Will and Way for our lives. When faced with the choice to explore the wiles of this world or to be about our Father's business; to become crippled with fear when we find ourselves lost or to run to our Father's house, the proper response seems quite obvious, even to a 12 year-old Jesus.

Before we continue this morning, let's take a moment to listen for God's voice and direction for our lives this morning. Let us pray!

God of Heaven, hear our prayers. Hear us as we seek to know you more, as we listen for your voice and direction in our lives and as we sit humbly desiring your Spirit guide us today. Just as Your Son Jesus knew at such a young age that he must be in Your house, so we too find ourselves today acknowledging this need in our lives; to be in Your house and to be about Your business. Help us, guide us and direct us that we may find ourselves focused solely on you this morning as we listen for your Word in our lives. Through the words of my lips and in the meditations of our hearts, speak to us, O Lord we pray in the name of the risen Christ. Amen!

Last week we spoke about the new life that is conceived within each of us when we accept Christ as our personal Lord and Savior and thus sign a covenant of relationship and reconciliation with our Creator. When I was in college, we used to use the term *baby Christian* to describe the life experiences of a new believer; explaining away their human faults and stumbles in the same way we would forgive a child who is first learning to walk. To be honest with you, I'm not sure I ever really bought into the whole *baby Christian* concept. Maybe it was because I believed that as responsible adolescents or adults our conversion into the Faith held a great deal more responsibility than the accountability of a child who was beginning to walk. Yet after reading today's lectionary reading I am once again finding myself being a little more compassionate and forgiving for those who find themselves young in the Faith.

Youth, however, is not without its wisdom. The boy Jesus was left behind in Jerusalem, there is no way of knowing based on our reading today if he was left by accident or if she slipped away from the caravan and stayed on purpose. We do, know, however that a big city experience on your own for any young child can be exciting, as well as crippling, regardless of how they were placed in the situation. But Jesus knew where he should be and what he should do. Rather

than allow himself to be overtaken by what the city had to offer, he sought refuge in the Temple; his Father's house.

Notice however, that our scripture reading doesn't say that when his parents arrived that he was overjoyed and relieved from his anxieties to see them. Rather, he questions why it took his parents three days to find him when they should have known where to find them. Where else would he be? And so we see that Jesus takes his situation; seemingly gloomy and full of despair and makes the most of it. He seeks refuge in his Father's house and he seeks guidance not only from his Father, but from those who shared an interest in Father's work; in God's business, as it were.

As Christians, it is not uncommon that we find ourselves in moments that are seemingly gloomy or full of despair. But as Christians, like the boy Jesus, we have an opportunity that others in the World don't have. Many children would have found themselves lost and disillusioned in being alone in a big city for three days, but not Jesus. So, too, we should greet each moment of anxiety, desperation and gloom with an equal sense of opportunity. To be honest, we don't even have to encounter moments that are quite so drastic; your best, most blessed day of the week, the one where you are feeling your best and find yourself without a care in the world; can equally be viewed as an opportunity to share with others what God has done and is doing in your life. We need to step up and be about the Father's business! Not blinded by our woes and/or our blessings, but constantly aware of every opportunity offered to us and quite honestly expected for us to share *good news* of Christ.

Earlier in the week I sent out an email about a 35 year old male in Gainesville, Georgia who took his own life. It is my understanding that he was a member of the LGBTQ Community but had not found acceptance with his Earthly family. Amid the challenges of the world, the

demands of the holiday season and the loneliness created by his estranged family, I imagine that it all became too much for him; rather than becoming focused on the opportunity, he was blinded by despair.

Chris' sister commented that we, as a Community of Faith, needed to do more to reach out to others like this young man and to let them know that we are here for them and that God loves them. At first I understood what she meant, but the more I thought about it, the more I began to hurt inside – not only for this man but for all those who meet each Sunday in their places of worship and preach salvation void of radical inclusivity. It shouldn't be just the responsibility of this church or this denomination to reach out to the LGBTQ Community, but it should be the responsibility of all of God's people to reach out to those who are headed in the wrong direction. There are people everywhere who everyday are finding themselves walking the path that they have chosen rather than the one that God has prepared for them and God's people need to be looking out for one another.

But you know what . . . Chris' sister is right. It may not be our sole responsibility. Maybe all Churches, Faith Communities and children of God have a responsibility to reach out to the marginalized and disenfranchised of this lost and dying world, but that does not preclude our responsibility to do all we can to help those closest to us. What I am saying is this, New Day Worship Center has been ordained by God to bring hope, peace, joy, love and radical inclusivity to the community of Toccoa, as well as those communities that surround us – Tammy from Baldwin; J.R. and Bobby from Jefferson; Donna, Angie and Susan from Cumming; Brian, Michael, Lane from Gainesville; many of you from Toccoa; the Lighthouse Ministry from Clayton. We have each been commissioned as children of God to be about our Father's business and to choose, when faced with the choice, to be in our Father's house.

In the coming year, I challenge each of you to bring a new soul into this Community of Faith; not for numbers but for carrying out the Vision Statement of International Christian Community Churches and that is to build and foster Christ – like community where the Kingdom of God will break forth; to offer hope to a lost and dying world. Never mind the responsibility of others, concentrate on our responsibility and our call to look at the World and say, “No, Thanks,” and to look to God and say, “Here I am Lord, send me.”

As we close this morning, take the time to consider your call, to prioritize your life this morning and seek the Will and Way of God in your life today. Reach out this morning and take hold of the master’s garment; feel the his nail scared hands and find hope and encouragement in the word’s of the boy child, Jesus “Why were you searching for me?” “Didn’t you know that I had to be in my Father’s house?” Jesus is in his Father’s house this morning. You don’t have to search for him anymore; you can meet him here today. Every head bowed and every eye closed. If you have been searching for Jesus; whether for a first time encounter or a renewed relationship, know is the opportunity to meet him. Know is the time when you can put aside your earthly troubles, anxieties and the pressures of the world and you can meet him here today. As the music plays this morning, I am going to ask that you keep your heads bowed and your eyes closed. If you want someone to pray with you, then take hold of the persons hand beside you and tell them you want to pray. You can come to the altar this morning, if you like. For those of you in this house this morning who are assured of your own salvation, listed for what God is saying to you today. Is he telling you to pray for someone near you? Is he telling you to reach out and hug someone; to reassure someone here today of God’s love for them? Want you listen for God’s voice this morning and regardless of your need, follow his command for you today. Amen!